

Letters from our readers

5 August 2010

On "Returning to the scene of the crime"

From the worker in Asia who cannot afford to purchase the tennis shoes they make to the worker in Detroit who cannot afford to purchase the car they make, we approach income equality.

John S

30 July 2010

On "An interview with Richard Brenneman, journalist who covered the Polanski trial"

Thank you for your continuing coverage of the Roman Polanski case. After reading your article, I too became curious about Sidney Korshak. Given his reputation as a "fixer," the relationship between Judge Rittenband and Korshak is important. Some research in the Historic *New York Times* electronic database turned up a 4-part investigative series written by Seymour Hersh, published June 27-29, 1976 as part of the newspaper's 6-month-long investigation of Korshak: "The Contrasting Lives of Sidney R. Korshak."

The *Times* described Korshak as "entrenched" in Hollywood's social and business structure, "the most important link between organized crime and legitimate business...a fixer who has been instrumental in helping criminal elements gain power in union affairs and infiltrate the leisure and entertainment industries." Korshak led a "double life": his ability to conceal his ties to organized crime from his legitimate clients, was key to his success. When he died in 1996 at the age of 88, the *New York Times* obituary described him as "an indispensable ally of leading Hollywood producers, corporate executives and politicians." He certainly proved indispensable to Lew Wasserman of MCA Inc. In 1973 he served as mediator in negotiations over the sale of MGM's overseas theaters and real estate (for \$17.5 million) and lease of the foreign rights to its film and TV library (for \$75 million) to Cinema International Corporation—a joint venture of Gulf & Western and MCA (Wasserman's company). Once described in an FBI report as a "hoodlum attorney,"

Korshak became so successful that he "has been invited into the board rooms of some of the nation's largest corporations to participate in their most sensitive decisions" according to the Hersh article ("Major Corporations Eager to Seek Korshak's Advice," by Seymour Hersh, *New York Times*, June 29, 1976). He served as adviser and "personal attorney" for numerous Hollywood executives and stars.

Korshak was never indicted "despite repeated Federal and state investigations," including blackmailing, bribery, kickbacks, extortion, labor racketeering, stock fraud and payoffs to judges. The *Times* articles note in particular, Korshak's early involvement as an attorney defending members of the Capone mob involved in the shakedown of Hollywood in the thirties. The 4-part series by Seymour Hirsch in the *New York Times* is fascinating; readers can locate it in many research libraries, on microfilm or electronic text.

Lesley J

Ohio, USA

Polanski may be the victim of the judicial system but so are so many others who don't have the money and prestige to avoid the consequences of their behavior. In Polanski's case it was the rape of a 13-year-old. It would have been far more important to discuss how a socialist society would deal with such a crime than turning Polanski into the victim.

Warren D

Tennessee, USA

30 July 2010

On "The American left and the WikiLeaks documents"

The confusion and naivete of "progressives" in the US is epitomized by Jim Wallis, of Sojourners and the 'Network of Spiritual Progressives':

http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/jim_wallis/2010/07/its_time_to_end_this_immoral_war

.html

Short version: The Afghan war is evil, but we can't just walk away.

Lloyd G

North Dakota, USA

31 July 2010

On "As casualties in Afghanistan rise, Army suicides, drug use set new records"

I went through VA rehab for substance abuse last fall and was in the same ward as the PTSD cases. In these wars, soldiers have access to Xanax "bars" and many are constantly jacked up on these. One young soldier—in rehab for his second time—described how many Xanaxs he went through—or any other drug—90 Lortabs might last a day or so. Another retired active duty soldier, who'd been to Somalia and other places, said he ate Oxycontin all day—no other way to get through it. Drug abuse is a natural concomitant of the pressures they're under ... and when they get home, look out: they are overwhelmed, and violence—to self and others—is merely part of the pathology. This is a human disaster, and the report shows there's no way to candy-coat it.

Rob M

31 July 2010

On "At Clinton wedding: The American aristocracy flaunts its wealth"

Your reference to the aristocracy before the French revolution is on target. \$20,000 for the vegan, gluten-free cake! That's about what I make in a year! "Let them eat cake" indeed!

Debra W

2 August 2010



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